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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5099  
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 004272

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR WILLIAMS/MAHER/STEINGER;  
PRM FOR PDAS GREENE AND PRM/ANE; NSC FOR  
ABRAMS/DORAN/WATERS; TREASURY FOR  
SZUBIN/LOEFFLER/NUGENT/HIRSON; BRUSSELS FOR LERNER; PLEASE  
PASS TO USAID FOR KUNDER/MCCLOUD/BORODIN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/22/16

TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: RAFAH CROSSING OPENS; WEST BANK AND GAZA CLOSED

1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) The Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt opened September 22 for the first time since August 25. Thousands of would-be travelers had already gathered on the Gaza side of the crossing when it opened at 0830 hours, according to PalTrade Gaza-based staff. The crossing closed for about an hour after Presidential Security guards fired warning shots in the air to drive back the surging crowd and restore order. According to a UN security officer, however, the Presidential Guard fired after gunmen hurled a hand grenade and opened fire in reaction to their family members not being allowed to cross. A Presidential Guard officer told RSO that no injuries occurred.

2. (SBU) Director General for General Administration of Crossings and Borders (GACB) Nazmi Muhanna announced to local press late September 21 that Rafah would be open in both directions September 22 and 23 from 0800 to 1800 hours. Local Arabic-language daily Al-Quds newspaper September 22 quoted an EU official as saying people traveling to Mecca, students, and medical patients would be given priority on September 22. Most of those hoping to transit Rafah during this period plan to travel to Mecca for Umra, the minor pilgrimage or hajj, according to press reports and observers at Rafah. Hundreds of students and medical patients seeking treatment abroad also intend to cross. (Note: Palestinian militant groups had threatened violence if Rafah did not open before Ramadan, which will begin on September 23 or 24. End Note.) Palestinian news agency Ma'an estimates that about 20,000 Palestinians hope to cross Rafah in the next few days.

3. (SBU) Local Arabic newspapers reported September 22 that the IDF has imposed a total closure on the West Bank and Gaza starting Friday, September 22 until Sunday, September 25 during the Jewish New Year holiday of Rosh Hashana.

DUFFY